

The USSR Committee for Party-State Control

The top level of the Soviet government always has been faced with a major problem in enforcing compliance by lower-level government organizations and economic enterprises with its regulations and directives. From the beginning the government has maintained a formal agency empowered to examine the records of all governmental organizations and economic enterprises; to require compliance with recommendations for improvement; to improve the system of penalties for infractions of regulations; and, in cases of criminal malfeasance, to turn accused persons over to the courts for prosecution.

These functions have been performed successively by the Workers and Peasants Inspection Board during the 1920's, the Soviet Control Commission during the 1930's, the Commissariat of State Control during World War II, and the Ministry of State Control up to the ministerial reorganization of 1957.

The successor agencies since 1957 -- the Commission of Soviet Control (1957-61) and the Commission of State Control (1961-62) -- have been subjected to increasing criticism because of the uncovering of a large number of cases of embezzlement and deliberate falsification of economic reports and particularly because of the extreme length of time during which some of these crimes escaped detection.

Although the repeated reorganizations appear to have failed to obtain a genuine tightening of control, the leadership tried again in November of last year with the creation of the Party-State Control Committee.

The new committee functions through union-republican committees of party-state control established in each of the 15 union-republics. These union-republican committees are subordinate both to the committee at the national level and to the union-republican councils of ministers. Directly subordinate to the union-republican committees are local committees formed in each province (oblast, kray, and autonomous republics) in the USSR.

The specific areas of investigation by the committee and its subordinate units include the auditing of the use of state funds and property and of economic reporting to the state; failures to fulfill state plans that lead to disruptions of production or construction such as failures to meet delivery schedules; and instances of gross inefficiency or mis-management.

The committee conducts investigations only on a highly selective basis, placing primary emphasis on priority areas and sectors of the economy. Despite the large size of its staff, the committee is able to exercise systematic surveillance over only a small portion of economic activity. The committee is forced to rely extensively on

the cooperation of other governmental agencies and on private individuals for the reporting to it of irregularities occurring in other sectors of the economy. These agencies include such national agencies as the State Bank, the Ministry of Finance, the USSR Council of National Economy (prior to November 1962 known as Gosplan) and local organs such as the comptrolling departments of the regional councils of national economy (sovnarkholzes) and of individual enterprises.

The fundamental problem facing the committee is that it must rely for reports of irregularities on other agencies that have specific knowledge of such irregularities. Other agencies, however, often are reluctant to call in outsiders to investigate such cases but prefer to deal with them internally for fear that the ensuing publicity will reflect on the entire agency. Moreover, the extreme pressures in the USSR for favorable economic reporting tend to militate against too close scrutiny of subordinate units for irregularities as long as the reporting continues to be favorable.

The latest reorganization attempts to deal with the insufficiency of control by augmenting the full-time staff of the committee and its subordinate units with volunteers drawn from the ranks of minor party members and the Komsomol (Communist Youth). The principal defect of this approach, which also was attempted under the preceding reorganization of August 1961 without visible success, is that it ignores the fact that the process of investigation is a highly technical one requiring specialized training and experience on the part of the investigator. Thus, volunteer investigators are likely to overlook all but the crudest and hence least important instances of embezzlement and fraud.

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